

## Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

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DCS Communications Office

July 23, 2004

### This Week In Central Office

#### Monday, July 19

Commissioner Miller traveled to Bledsoe County and visited the Taft Youth Development Center staff. Miller also visited the Cookeville Group Home in Putnam County.



Above: Commissioner Miller talks with current students at Taft YDC.

#### Wednesday July 21

Commissioner Miller visited several group homes in the North East region. First, she traveled to Washington County and visited the following: North East Academy, Johnson City Boys Group Home and Johnson City O & A.

Miller then travel to Carter County to visit with the staff of Elizabethton Group Home and Lift Academy.

### The Week Ahead

#### Monday, July 26

Commissioner Miller will visit the Bradley County and Madisonville Group Homes.

Staff Contact: [Carla.aaron@state.tn.us](mailto:Carla.aaron@state.tn.us)

#### Tuesday, July 27

Commissioner Miller will visit the Nashville Transition Center.

Staff Contact: [Carla.aaron@state.tn.us](mailto:Carla.aaron@state.tn.us)

## Case Managers and Team Coordinators to Receive Pay Increase



This month all state employees will receive a 3% bonus thanks to the generosity of the Governor and Tennessee General Assembly. In addition, DCS Case Manager 1, 2, 3, 4, and Team Coordinator positions will receive an additional increase, which will be equivalent to a two-step (9%) increase in salary.

This pay increase was effective July 1, 2004, and should be reflected on the July 31 paycheck. *(Pay increases for other classifications were not granted at this time.)*

Commissioner Miller desires to grant the equivalent of a two-step annual increase each year for the next three years for all DCS case managers. By the third year, her goal is to ensure that DCS Case Manager salaries are equal to, or greater than, the average starting salaries of neighboring states!

Commissioner Miller began this financial commitment to case managers while speaking on the House Floor on January 14, 2004, where she addressed the importance of improving the salary of DCS front line workers. "We must begin to address the salary inequities between the State's child welfare professionals and those in the private sector and surrounding states," Miller said.

"Case manager positions are unique to DCS," she continued. "We have many dedicated, hardworking employees who go into harms way with no badge, no gun and no uniform. They deserve as many resources we can possibly give them."

Commissioner Miller will continue to advocate for salary increases for other positions within the department.

"DCS employees should know that I promise to do whatever I can to recognize the very important role that the support staff play. I simply cannot do everything at once, though I wish I could," Miller said.

## Policy Revision to Sick Leave Transfer Program



The Sick Leave Transfer Program allows state employees to donate leave to other state employees who are members of the Sick Leave Bank. Employees receiving donated sick leave must also have exhausted all of their own accumulated sick, annual, and compensatory leave and have received payment for all approved days through the Sick Leave Bank. Additional eligibility criteria are outlined in the Department of Personnel's Attendance and Leave Policy Manual beginning on page 21.

Currently, employees requesting to donate leave must agree to donate a minimum of ten (10) days (75 or 80 hours depending upon the employee's work schedule). Effective July 1, 2004, the minimum donation under this program will be reduced to five (5) days (37.5 or 40 hours depending upon the employee's work schedule). This policy change is

intended to provide employees a greater opportunity to take advantage of this valuable program.

The Department of Personnel is in the process of adjusting the appropriate pages in the policy manual and adjusting the PDF version of the manual on the website. If you have questions about the Sick Leave Transfer Program or the Sick Leave Bank in general, please contact Abby Stroud at 615-532-5541.

## **DCS Community Forums Continue!**

### ***DEPARTMENT SEEKS COMMUNITY INPUT AS CATALYST FOR CHANGE***

Commissioner Viola Miller launched a new initiative to collect feedback from communities across the state that can be used to determine how the department can better provide services to children and families, and the department began this series of community forums in Dresden on Tuesday, July 13.

Regional Administrators and Executive Directors from DCS Central Office will lead the discussions seeking the community's perspectives on what can be accomplished collaboratively to keep children safe.

To view a complete statewide community forum listing, please visit  
[www.state.tn.us/youth/CommunityForums.htm](http://www.state.tn.us/youth/CommunityForums.htm)

## **New DCS Employment Opportunities!**



Be sure to check the employee intranet for new employment opportunity postings.

Newest posting: [Ombudsman Program Coordinator](#)

## **Andrea Walks for Tennessee's Children**



Online registration is now available for First Lady Andrea Conte's child advocacy center walk-a-thon! Please visit the link below to register for the statewide walk to raise money for Tennessee's CACs!

[www.active.com/event\\_detail.cfm?event\\_id=1149520](http://www.active.com/event_detail.cfm?event_id=1149520)

## From the Commissioner's Inbox ...

DCS Program Specialist Gail Seymour shared the following in an email dated July 19, 2004:



Commissioner,

I want to thank you for the letter that you had Peggy prepare for the family of Alvie Moore (Shelby County Foster Parent who died).

I was honored to read the letter at the service. The family was also very appreciative. I presented the letter in a document folder to Mr. Moore. The foster home support unit in Shelby also presented a framed proclamation to the family. The department was well represented at the service.

The Moores have served as foster parents for over 21 years, and although they never had any birth children, they parented many of our children. Family and friends had many kind words to say, but none were as powerful as the statement from a former foster child.

Here is the short version of his story:

*Robert, former foster child placed with the Moores (now 38 years old) told his story at the service. His mother died when he was 8 years old. Before she died, she would often tell him that she loved him. He had been in many placements prior to coming to the Moores home at age 17. He said Mrs. Moore was the first person since his mother that told him that she loved him. Because of the love that was bestowed upon him in this home, he became an honor student for the first time, graduated and went on to college to earn a bachelor's degree from Memphis State University, a master's degree from University of Mississippi, and last month a Master of Divinity! This he accredits to the love that was given to him by the Moores!!!*

Thank you, Gail, submitting and sharing your heart-felt story with us.

## The DCS Fast Track to Success!

*Executive Director of Regional Support Judy Cole writes this week's essay:*

Let's say you just traded your reliable old Chevy for a brand new high-powered turbo-charged sports car. Your new car goes so fast that you struggle at times to keep it in the road. Think about how you feel as you sit in your new car. Do you feel like you can conquer the world? Do you feel like you have unlimited power at your fingertips? Can you feel the rumble of the engine as you rev it up? How wonderful it must all seem as you sit behind the wheel for the first time.

DCS just traded cars. We are behind the wheel of our brand new, turbo-charged vehicle - the Implementation Plan for Best Practice. We are headed toward a quality organization and unleashing the power of our new wheels. We must hurry so that our children aren't left behind. Each and every one of us must get acquainted with our new plan and rush toward total implementation as quickly as we can. We must have a sense of urgency for the children's sake. We must keep our foot firmly on the accelerator.

Remember when you were a child and you didn't think your next birthday would ever get here? It seemed as if Santa would never arrive. We must all remember how we felt as children and use that perspective of "child time" as we do our work. Childhood can never be recaptured. We get only one chance and our children deserve for us to make haste as we protect as much of their childhood as possible.

The Implementation Plan itself cannot change how we do business. We all must participate in putting into practice the principles of Best Practice. We must drive this new car with a sense of urgency for our children and families.

Their very lives are dramatically affected by everything we **do** and everything we **don't** do. Wouldn't you want the best for your own family? How can we do any less for those

we serve?

There are 8 domains in the Path to Excellence. Each domain has an impact on how we do our work.

1. Leadership and Management is the first domain and will focus on providing leadership to the regions as we all work to implement the plan.
2. The second domain addresses the development of a diverse and qualified workforce. This will mean a greater sense of professionalism for our work and a new respect for our workforce. We all will benefit from this effort.
3. Child and Family Team Meetings are domain 3 and it is so very critical to helping our families build upon their strengths.
4. Domain 4 is Child Protective Services and a service we **must** do very well - it could be a matter of life or death.
5. The Placement Process is the fifth domain and is focused on reducing trauma to our children. They need for us to make good decisions early and stop moving them around so much. Every time we move them, we create more traumas. We must stop.
6. The sixth domain is Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Home Development and Support. We not only need homes for children, we need quality homes and we need to support our foster parents whether they are foster or kinship homes.
7. Resource Development is domain 7 and will assist us in improving the utilization of our resources and help us identify what other resources we need to better serve our customers.
8. Quality Assurance, Continuous Quality Improvement and Data Management is the final domain. We must be all about quality and CQI (continuous quality improvement) is coming your way soon. Look forward to it and embrace it with vigor. It will help us identify our process weaknesses so that we can do our work

better. As the Commissioner often says, no one of us is as smart as all of us.

**The road we have before us is paved with good sound practice.** We cannot get to our destination without starting our journey and feeling a sense of urgency to become all we can be. This will take all of us. There will be detours and road blocks and potholes along the way and we must anticipate them and work together to get around the barriers, keeping in mind the we must work with

haste for our children - to preserve a piece of their childhood.

So fasten your seatbelts and hang on tight. We are in for a speedy ride toward becoming a quality organization that we can not only feel proud of, but also can feel that the most vulnerable citizens of Tennessee are getting our best work.

Best Practice is not just a catch phrase; it's what we do for our children and families.



Faith is defined as having trust or confidence in something about which objective proof cannot be shown.

It is important that we all have something in our lives that we can have faith in, whether that it a religion, another person, or our own abilities.

Our ability to have faith in something is the foundation stone of positivity. If we can believe absolutely in one thing - be that the existence of God, the love of our partner, our ability to find a parking space, or our inalienable right to succeed - we have the seed of greatness inside of us.

"If you can't have faith in what is held up to you for faith, you must find things to believe in yourself, for a life without faith in something is too narrow a space to live."

~George E. Woodberry

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